UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/852,336	05/08/2001	James Duncan Work	4938P001	4814

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EXAMINER
CHEA, PHILIP J

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
2153	

DATE MAILED: 06/09/2006

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

PTO-90C (Rev. 10/03)

	Application No.	Applicant(s)
Interview Summary	09/852,336	WORK, JAMES DUNCAN
	Examiner	Art Unit	
	Philip J. Chea	2153	

All participants (applicant, applicant's representative, PTO personnel):

(1) *Philip J. Chea.*

(3)*Duncan Work.*

(2) *William Vaughn.*

(4)*Tarek Fahmi 41402.*

Date of Interview: **5/31/06**

Type: a)☒ Telephonic   b)☐ Video Conference
      c)☐ Personal [copy given to: 1)☐ applicant   2)☐ applicant's representative]

Exhibit shown or demonstration conducted: d)☒ Yes   e)☐ No.
    If Yes, brief description: *See Attached*.

Claim(s) discussed: *148, 172.*

Identification of prior art discussed: *Robertson pgpub, Kautz article*.

Agreement with respect to the claims f)☐ was reached.   g)☐ was not reached.   h)☒ N/A.

Substance of Interview including description of the general nature of what was agreed to if an agreement was reached, or any other comments: *Mr. Fahmi pointed out differences between the prior art and the instant application. However, the Examiner and Mr. Vaughn did not think the claim language as proposed was sufficient to overcome the prior art without a thorough reconsideration.*

(A fuller description, if necessary, and a copy of the amendments which the examiner agreed would render the claims allowable, if available, must be attached. Also, where no copy of the amendments that would render the claims allowable is available, a summary thereof must be attached.)

THE FORMAL WRITTEN REPLY TO THE LAST OFFICE ACTION MUST INCLUDE THE SUBSTANCE OF THE INTERVIEW. (See MPEP Section 713.04). If a reply to the last Office action has already been filed, APPLICANT IS GIVEN A NON-EXTENDABLE PERIOD OF THE LONGER OF ONE MONTH OR THIRTY DAYS FROM THIS INTERVIEW DATE, OR THE MAILING DATE OF THIS INTERVIEW SUMMARY FORM, WHICHEVER IS LATER, TO FILE A STATEMENT OF THE SUBSTANCE OF THE INTERVIEW. See Summary of Record of Interview requirements on reverse side or on attached sheet.

Examiner Note: You must sign this form unless it is an Attachment to a signed Office action.

Examiner's signature, if required

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

Application No.: 09/852,336

First Named Inventor: James Duncan Work

Filed: 5/8/2001

Art unit: 2153

Examiner: Chea, Philip J.

Confirmation No.: 4814

Commissioner for Patents
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

[PROPOSED] AMENDMENT

Sir:

In response to the Office Action of March 10, 2006, please enter the following amendments:

Amendments to the Claims are reflected in the listing of claims which begins on page 2 of this paper.

Remarks begin on page 6 of this paper.

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of the claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1-147. (Canceled).

148.   (Currently Amended) A computer-implemented method, comprising reporting matches to searches initiated by a searcher so long as access control criteria are met, the matches including potential targets satisfying one or more search criteria defined for the searches, and the access control criteria (i) being selectably controllable by any of one or more persons in one or more chains of person-to-person relationships connecting the searcher and the potential targets, ~~each of the chains of person-to-person relationships including at least three person-to-person connections,~~ and (ii) defining ~~attributes~~ a hierarchy of access levels assigned to said one or more persons and said one or more persons' contacts ~~that may be shared with others; and so long as said reporting is not precluded by any of the one or more persons in the chain of person-to-person relationships connecting the searcher and the potential target to which each of the matches pertain~~.

149.   (Currently Amended) The computer-implemented method of claim 148, wherein ~~one attribute defined by~~ the access control criteria ~~establishes~~ include connection strengths for person-to-person relationships and wherein said search criteria ~~defines~~ define a minimum connection strength for a person-to-person relationship that is required between persons forming said one or more chains of person-to-person relationships connecting the searcher and the potential targets.

150.   (Currently Amended) The computer-implemented method of claim 148, wherein ~~at least one attribute defined by~~ the access control criteria ~~comprises~~ comprise an indication of a connection strength for at least one of the person-to-person relationships between persons forming said one or more chains of person-to-person relationships.

151.   (Previously Presented) The computer-implemented method of claim 148, wherein the search criteria include a connection threshold specified by the searcher, the connection threshold indicating a maximum number of person-to-person relationships to be allowed in establishing said one or more chains of person-to-person relationships connecting the searcher and the potential targets.

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152.   (Previously Presented) The computer-implemented method of claim 148, wherein the access control criteria comprise a connection threshold indicating a maximum number of person-to-person relationships to be allowed in establishing said one or more chains of person-to-person relationships.

153.   (Cancelled)

154.   (Cancelled)

155.   (Currently Amended) The computer-implemented method of claim 148, wherein the matches are reported only so long as a connection between each person associated with said one or more person-to-person relationships connecting the searcher and the potential targets satisfies at least one attribute of the access control criteria established by a next subsequent connector in a connection path between the searcher and the potential target.

156.   (Previously Presented) The computer-implemented method of claim 148, wherein reporting matches to searches initiated by a searcher so long as access control criteria are met further comprises autonomously brokering connections between the searcher and the potential target so as to provide information regarding the one or more persons in the one or more chains of person-to-person relationships connecting the searcher and the potential targets.

157.   (Cancelled)

158.   (Previously Presented) The computer-implemented method of claim 156, wherein autonomously brokering connections between the searcher and the potential target further comprises brokering, in accordance with one or more instructions supplied by any one or more connecting individuals in an inter-personal connection path from the searcher to a potential target, where such instructions refer to attributes of relationships between any two or more said persons in said chains.

159.   (Cancelled)

160.   (Cancelled)

161.   (Currently Amended) The computer-implemented method of claim 148, wherein one attribute of the access control criteria determines whether a third party evaluation report is accessible to the searcher, said third party evaluation report (i) pertaining to a person forming a person-to-person relationship connecting the searcher and the potential target, and (ii) being integrated with a personal profile of said person forming a person-to-person relationship connecting the searcher and the potential target.

162. (Previously Presented) The computer-implemented method of claim 161, wherein said third party evaluation report is not accessible to said person forming a person-to-person relationship connecting the searcher and the potential target.

163. (Cancelled)

164. (Cancelled)

165. (Cancelled)

166. (Cancelled)

167. (Cancelled)

168. (Cancelled)

169. (Cancelled)

170. (Cancelled)

171. (Cancelled)

172. (Currently Amended) A computer-implemented method, comprising reporting matches to search criteria specified in a search initiated by a searcher so long as a connection strength between each two people forming a person-to-person connection in a chain of ~~at least three~~ person-to-person connections between the searcher and a potential target exceeds a connection strength threshold, said connection strength being an attribute of access control criteria that are selectably controllable by any of one or more persons in said chain of person-to-person connections between the searcher and the potential target~~, and so long as said reporting is not precluded by any of the one or more persons in the chain of person-to-person connections connecting the searcher and the potential target to which each of the matches pertain~~.

173. (Previously Presented) The computer-implemented method of claim 172, wherein the connection strength threshold is included in the search criteria specified by the searcher.

174. (Previously Presented) The computer-implemented method of claim 172, wherein the connection strength threshold is established by the potential target.

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175. (Previously Presented) The computer-implemented method of claim 172, wherein the connection strength threshold determines the minimum connection strength required between two people forming a person-to-person connection in a chain of person-to-person connections between the searcher and the potential target.

REMARKS

Reconsideration of this application, as amended, is respectfully requested. The claims as amended are supported in the specification. For example, the "hierarchy of access levels" recited in claim 148 is described in the specification paragraphs [0064]-[0065]. Accordingly, no new matter is added.

1. **Claim 148 is not anticipated by Robertson et al. , because Robertson fails to describe access control criteria that define a hierarchy of access levels for one or more users and their contacts.**

As amended, Claim 148 is patentable over Robertson. Robertson describes a system that uses dichotomous permission types (friend-of-friend or not) to grant or not grant an individual access to information. Such permission types are substantially different from the hierarchy of access levels recited in the present claims.

To better illustrate this point, consider the permission scheme described by Robertson. In this system, an individual designated a "Friend of a Friend" by an intermediary is able to obtain information about a contact of that intermediary that another individual without that permission type would not be able to receive. This is of course provided that the target contact has likewise granted the intermediary "Friend of Friend" permission. Such permissions can extend to further degrees of separation between the searcher and the target. Robertson at ¶¶. 104 - 106.

In contrast, the hierarchy of access levels recited in the claimed invention suggests series in which each element is graded or ranked. See, e.g., The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition 2004, Houghton Mifflin Company. That is, more than a permission or not form of access control is provided. Hierarchies of access levels provide for a richness not contemplated by or possible using binary permission schemes such as those described by Robertson. Consequently, claim 148 is patentable over Robertson.

2.   Claims 148 and 172, and their respective dependent claims are patentable over Robertson in view of Kautz, because neither reference, whether considered alone or in combination, teaches or suggests the claimed invention.

Claim 148 is further patentable over the combination of Robertson and Kautz. Kautz is cited for describing what the office Action refers to as the use of "connection strength". Whether or not this contention is correct (and below we demonstrate that this contention is in fact incorrect), adding such teaching to those of Robertson would not cure the above-cited defect. That is, even if concepts of connection strength were included in the scheme described by Robertson, the fact would remain that Robertson neither teaches nor suggests the use of hierarchies of access levels, as presently claimed. Hence, claim 148, and by implication all of its dependent claims 149-152, 155, 156 and 158, are patentable over this combination of references.

Kautz is being interpreted such that "connection strength [defines] how closely linked the searcher is to the target. In this case, asking a colleague what they know about something indicates a high connection strength." Office Action p.3, section 4. Such an interpretation is wrong. The Office Action confuses connection strength with connection threshold.

As was explained during the last interview with the Examiner, a connection **threshold** provides for a "maximum number" of individuals, or radius, of person-to-person connections. See, e.g., claim 151. Connection strength, on the other hand implicates attributes of a relationship other than mere radius from the searcher. The cited references (Robertson and Kautz) do not provide for a system in which access control is based upon connection **strength**.

Claims 149 and 150 recite the use of connection strength. Hence, this is a separate and independent reason why these claims are patentable over the combination of Robertson and Kautz. Likewise, claim 172 recites the use of connection strength. Hence, claim 172 and its dependent claims, 173-175, are patentable over the combination of Robertson and Kautz.

3.   Claims 161 and 162 are patentable over Robertson in view of Kautz and Walker, because the combination of the three references fails to describe the third party evaluation feature of the claimed invention.

In contrast to the statement made in the Office Action, Walker's system for facilitating employment searches is not equivalent to the third party evaluation report presently claimed. For example, Walker's system does not provide an evaluation of a person within the person-to-person chain connecting the searcher to the potential target. Walker's system simply matches the profiles of potential employees to

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criteria established by employers and then gives the profiles of the potential employees to the employers. There is no third party evaluation of those potential employees, nor is it possible to form a chain of person-to-person relationships in Walker.

Walker describes a method for anonymous communications between employers and potential employees. The "authentication request" described in Walker is a verification of the authorship and origin of information stored in an employee database. This is not equivalent to the presently claimed third party evaluation report because the authentication request does not pertain "to a person forming a person-to-person relationship connecting the searcher and the potential target". Nor is Walker's authentication request "integrated with a personal profile" of a person "forming a person-to-person relationship connecting the searcher and the potential target."

Similarly, Kautz does not teach or suggest a third party evaluation. Instead, Kautz allows the searcher to specify a social radius, but does not describe a third party evaluation report that is "integrated with a personal profile".

For at least these reasons, claims 161 and 162 are patentable over the cited references.

If there are any additional fees associated with this communication, please charge Deposit Account No. 19-3140.

Respectfully submitted,

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Dated: _

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